Make It In America: What's Next?
Innovative Ideas from the First Hearing

On Thursday, July 9, House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer and House Democrats held the first hearing in a series of hearings titled "Make It In America: What's Next?" Since 2010, House Democrats have been focused on their Make It In America jobs plan to support a robust domestic manufacturing sector, promote American exports, encourage businesses to bring jobs back to the U.S., and invest in education and skills training. Five years later, sixteen Make It In America bills have been signed into law to do just that. Now, House Democrats are working together to update the Make It In America plan so it reflects the new economic challenges and opportunities we face in 2015. During the first "Make It In America: What's Next?" hearing, twenty-one House Democrats testified, discussing challenges and successes in their districts and what the Make It In America plan should look like today. Here's a look at challenges and successes they identified, as well as new, innovative ideas for the Make It In America plan:

AMERICAN INNOVATION PANEL

Rep. G. K. Butterfield (NC-01)

"The forty-six members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), collectively representing more than 30 million Americans, are acutely aware of the unique challenges and the promising opportunities that come with creating jobs of the future. But, America has yet to unlock the full potential of innovation because of the lack of African American representation in the Internet economy… That's why the Congressional Black Caucus launched CBC TECH 2020 to bring together the best minds in the tech, non-profit, education, and public sectors to achieve full representation of African Americans at every level of the technology industry by 2020."

"First, we must make targeted investments in STEM education starting in middle school… We must also ensure that our Historically Black Colleges and Universities have the resources necessary to prepare our students to be competitive in the tech economy… Second, we must see greater transparency from tech companies, particularly those who have not released their diversity data. This is the first step toward improving the diversity of the industry. Finally, we invite organizations to work with us to produce a TECH 2020 African American Inclusion Plan. Each company would draft a plan that fits its unique circumstances in the marketplace and would set goals, commit resources, and outline action items to increase African American inclusion. We want to work in partnership with you to produce substantive and attainable goals. Colleagues, we know that the best days of American innovation are ahead, but we can only truly be successful if we put **all** of our best minds to work."

Rep. Jared Polis (CO-02)

"Start-ups are no longer just about a small group of people huddling together to pool their ideas and resources. They're about crowdsourcing ideas and investment opportunities. They're about developing source code collaboratively and taking advantage of open source technology, and about protecting the resources that all businesses and economies depend on to grow – whether they're natural resources like air and water or technological resource like the Internet and wireless spectrum. That means public policy has to catch up to the

needs of 21st-century innovators. We should be promoting collaboration and looking to eliminate barriers to entry – so that folks with good ideas can market them to potential investors who can help implement them, and start-ups can compete with name-brand corporations that far too often still monopolize the marketplace."

"Access to capital is one of the largest challenges a startup can face. In the modern economy, where startups can rise and fall in the blink of an eye, the traditional banking system does not always meet the capital demands of startup firms. Moving forward, we must continue to look for creative ways to make sustainable and usable capital accessible [to] entrepreneurs, while also balanc[ing] protections for investors."

Rep. Bill Foster (IL-14)

"We need new ways to foster that interest in learning how things work and how to build them better. Doing so will serve as a way to get kids interested in the STEM fields and lay the foundation for a bright future…To accomplish this, I introduced H.R. 1622, the National Fab Lab Network Act. A fab lab is a set of digitally controlled machine tools that enable you to build just about anything. These are the tools of modern manufacturing: 3D printers, laser cutters, routers, and computer-aided design tools. They can be used to build anything: a bracelet, machine part, or even a fully functioning computer. My bill would create a federal charter for a non-profit organization called the National Fab Lab Network. A national network of fab labs would give children access to the tools and guidance they need to build things. For a child, turning something they imagine into something they can hold in their hands is a powerful experience. It changes the way they think of themselves. 'I make things,' becomes part of their identity."

"For our nation to prosper and for our economy to grow, America needs makers. Fab labs would also help our nation's existing makers by enabling them to rapidly prototype their idea. Small businesses start with an idea; fab labs give entrepreneurs the tools they need to turn their ideas into realities. Too often, this is the stage would-be businessmen and inventors can't get past. Fab Labs democratize and spread the means to innovate and produce real world products—designed, created, and produced right here in the United States. From the local to the national scale, invention and innovation drive economic growth. The Congress is positioned to provide the investment and create the environment to drive and nurture the next great idea."

Rep. Suzan DelBene (WA-01)

"We are entering a new era of connected devices called the Internet of Things that holds transformative promise for our economy and the way we live, work, and play. Our homes, cities, and even our wrists will be connected in unprecedented ways. And this means that the people designing these products will need to understand how to produce technologically complex products that interact with other products. And it also means that we will need to understand how to handle and protect the communications and vast amounts of data that will come from these products."

"If we want to continue to 'Make it in America,' we must support innovation, invest in a 21st century technology infrastructure and educate our workforce for the jobs of tomorrow."

Rep. Mark Takano (CA-41)

"Consumers are demanding higher quality goods that provide a more personal experience, and Artisans, Makers and Small-Scale producers are better equipped to handle that demand then our international competitors… While we associate garage workshops with early inventors—like the home computing clubs that led to the PC revolution—this new generation of innovators have set up shops in large warehouses, or 'Makerspaces,' that operate on a gym membership type business model. For an average of $100 a month, members receive access to millions of dollars' worth of advanced manufacturing equipment. Once members are trained, they can use that equipment for any type of project they want to pursue."

"As legislators we can visit and support our local Makerspaces, we can push to make crowdsourcing rules simpler, while ensuring strong oversight and consumer protections and we can incentivize local zoning and development of small batch manufacturing as part of redevelopment plans."

SKILLS TRAINING FOR THE FUTURE PANEL

Rep. Brian Higgins (NY-26)

"In this new global environment it is essential that American workers develop the skills to keep them ahead of the competition. And because technologies change and industries adapt, our workers need sustained continuing education over the course of their careers to keep their edge."

"It is time that we do nation building right here at home… I suggest that the Make It In America agenda should encourage Congress to enact a much more robust infrastructure bill this year than the timid approach currently under consideration."

Rep. Tim Walz (MN-01)

"Outsourcing today is but a symptom of the underlying problem. We do not have the labor force at the ready to fill these highly skilled positions. We need [to] start rethinking asking our students to only consider 4 year degrees. We need welders, electricians, and mechanics—all noble, honorable professions. Many high schools are cutting shop class—this is a mistake; let's ask that shop, wood crafting, mechanic and other vocational classes be added back in as high school electives. These types of jobs can provide them with a middle class wage, benefits, stock options, and more."

"With an increased workforce, comes with an increased need for affordable housing. When I talk about affordable housing, I mean housing for the working [and] middle class. Housing costs are the single biggest expenditure in family budgets. Even though the housing market has returned, Congress has failed in renewing and funding programs that help ensure these types of houses are being built."

Rep. Jim Himes (CT-04)

"The dual trends of globalization and increasing technology have changed the way that the American factory floor looks, and has increased the level of skill necessary for many manufacturing jobs… The jobs are still there, they just require drastically different skills in the 21st Century than they did in the 20th."

"We need to dedicate the necessary resources to train new workers, and retrain current workers, with the skills they need to succeed in the new economy. This starts in elementary education and high school with an increased emphasis on the STEM knowledge that today's jobs require, and continues in higher education. Not just in traditional, four-year colleges, but in community colleges and trade schools as well."

Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (OR-01)

"The need to close the skills gap is clear…So what can federal policymakers do to help close this gap? An important starting place is to consider what skills our economy will require in the future."

"Across the country, schools are integrating the arts and creative learning opportunities into traditional STEM subjects. This does not dilute learning or minimize the importance of science, technology, engineering and math—it enhances STEM by challenging both halves of students' brains. Combining arts and design with computer engineering, for example, is more representative of the kinds of cross-disciplinary collaboration that is so critical in workplaces in the real world."

Rep. Donald Norcross (NJ-01)

"Not everyone in America wants or needs a college degree; but everyone needs a toolkit. Today apprentices make up only 0.2 percent of the U.S. labor force, far less than in Canada (2.2 percent), Britain (2.7 percent), and Australia and Germany (3.7 percent). Apprenticeships and non-traditional learning pathways should be part of Americans' tool kits, too."

"Unfortunately, in spite of proposals by both the Administration and colleagues in both chambers to build upon and expand [apprentice and journey-level training], the federal government apprenticeship programs are funded at a paltry $40 million. In an age where workforce qualifications are changing by leaps and bounds to reflect the growth in technology and efficiency, its unthinkable that we would deny Americans of all age this opportunity. More importantly, withholding this tool from Americans' toolkits dulls our workforce's competitive edge in a global economy."

THE FUTURE OF MANUFACTURING PANEL

Rep. John Garamendi (CA-03)

"Further decline of the U.S. shipbuilding industrial base will continue to erode competitive bidding among shipyards, thus compromising efforts to reduce the deficit and balance the national budget. It will also result in the further loss of marine engineering expertise, preventing the adoption and utilization of the same cutting edge ship construction technologies used by our foreign competitors."

"The export of LNG will slowly ramp up over the next two or three years and will then quickly accelerate over the next decade or more. This allows both time and a stable, long-term market demand, which—if given the correct incentives—could spur the U.S. shipbuilding industry to re-tool its infrastructure and processes to ramp up the production of domestic tankers and ultimately produce vessels for export of this strategic national asset. The opportunity is ripe to push a program that reinvigorates our domestic maritime industry, advances American manufacturing, creates good shipbuilding and maritime jobs, and reclaims our expertise in a technology we once pioneered."

Rep. Cheri Bustos (IL-17)

"[W]e still struggle with many of the same problems faced by communities across the country: a mismatch between the skills that workers have and the skills employers need; entrepreneurs who find it difficult to secure the capital needed to take their ideas to the next level; and hard working families playing by the rules who feel the American dream slipping farther from their reach."

"In 2013, I joined with the University of Illinois to launch "Partnering for Illinois' Economic Future," and we've been partners in economic development since. One of our most important successes we had was to bring the new Digital Manufacturing and Design Innovation Institute to Illinois… The Lab's research work will help develop innovative solutions that transform defense and civilian manufacturing and create jobs. Because many of these jobs will require new and advanced skills, the Digital Lab will also partner with educational institutions, trade organizations, and local economic development organizations on workforce development.… It is my hope that we can bring the collaborative approach I've pursued in Illinois to the national level."

Rep. Elizabeth Esty (CT-05)

"Manufacturing is the backbone of our economy. In order to secure our nation's strong economic future, we must support our manufacturing and innovation ecosystem."

"We cannot strengthen manufacturing without a twenty-first century workforce with the skills employers need. That's why I proudly introduced the Manufacturing Universities Act of 2015. This bipartisan bill would establish a Manufacturing Universities program at the National Institute of Standards and Technology. This will help colleges and universities with existing engineering programs sharpen their focus on manufacturing, developing joint projects with local manufacturing firms and supporting student internships with community manufacturers. By increasing the focus on manufacturing at the collegiate level, we can target students who have already shown an aptitude for—and dedication to—science, technology, engineering, and math, the STEM fields that are critical to modern manufacturing."

Rep. Joe Kennedy (MA-04)

"In my district, older industrial cities and towns like Fall River and Taunton are navigating unemployment rates over double the state rate. These are proud communities that share something in common with hundreds like them across the country – a heritage of work ethic, ingenuity and skill that they have cultivated since the Industrial Revolution, carefully passed from one generation to the next. These are the communities that coined the term 'Made in America'; that made that phrase really mean something... There is no question that new industries are powering today's economy. Where we once had textiles and jewelry and silver, we have health care and clean energy and robotics. But these innovative new sectors still require the most fundamental building block of industry – high quality, innovative, and sustainable goods, made right here on American soil. Whether it's a wind turbine, a prosthetic knee or an air pollution monitor, there is a thriving role for American manufacturing in our increasingly technology-driven world."

"That potential for manufacturing to bridge the gap between communities thriving in our modern economy and those working day and night to catch up is why I was proud to introduce the Revitalize American Manufacturing and Innovation Act last year. This bill would create a network of manufacturing institutes across the country, each dedicated to a modern manufacturing process or challenge…We know that bringing academia, industry and government together under one roof spurs innovation in our manufacturing sector. And we know that we can and should replicate those institutes in new regions around the country so we can continue to create jobs and train the workers who will fill them."

Rep. Ann Kuster (NH-02)

"Companies across the state are leading the effort - with innovation and ingenuity - to modernize and revitalize our state's manufacturing industry. Most of the old-fashioned, and sometimes dangerous, tools of yesterday have been replaced with innovative new equipment and computerized technology of the future. And that's the conversation we need to be having all across the country; how can we breathe more life into this already successful, but often misunderstood, industry? How can we modernize the manufacturing sector, so companies can not only make their products here in America, but they themselves can 'make it in America' – and become American success stories?"

"Beyond education and innovation, our focus is also on transportation. We need to ensure that once we've trained the students, hired the workers, and created the products, our companies can easily ship these products and make a profit."

Rep. Debbie Dingell (MI-12)

"We must also do more to support emerging manufacturers as they begin to bring their product to market, especially in the scale-up phase. Experts often cite the case of flat-panel display production, where the United States lost out to foreign competition, and continues to lag behind today."

"Scaling up advanced manufacturing projects is different than many other industries. While Silicon Valley is awash in venture capitalists and other private sector funders, emerging manufacturers often do not have access to a similar capital structure. There are a number of reasons for this, but unlike building a new app, construction of a new production facility requires a big capital commitment – up to $100 million – and the payback timeline is often up to 10 years, whereas non-manufacturing projects require less capital and have much shorter payback timelines."

"MAKING IT" ACROSS THE ECONOMY PANEL

Rep. Grace Napolitano (CA-32)

"One major way to boost our manufacturing sector is to require American-made products and materials are used for infrastructure improvements. Yet, while I support always using materials made in the USA, we must be cautious of unintended consequences and protect our business sector from job losses by allowing them transition periods to comply with contracted requirements."

"Another way is to support local hiring provisions. In March of this year, USDOT announced a new initiative to permit local hiring for projects funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), correcting an outdated law that prohibited cities and local transportation agencies from hiring locally when one dollar of federal money was used or received. Now, cities with high unemployment are allowed to compete for jobs for their own residents."

Rep. Joe Courtney (CT-02)

"At a recent visit to the Connecticut submarine manufacturer Electric Boat in my district, U.S. Secretary of Labor Tom Perez noted that our nation is facing what he called an 'Eisenhower moment.' In the wake of World War II in the 1950s, President Eisenhower led a national undertaking to develop the federal highway infrastructure that grew our nation's economy and connected our country at new levels. Secretary Perez asserted that today our nation must mirror that effort to develop a 'skills infrastructure' in our workforce that will help our economy grow and succeed."

"In Connecticut, partners at every level have united over the last five years to develop a regional workforce strategy known as the 'Eastern Connecticut Manufacturing Pipeline.' Led by the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB) and Electric Boat, along with the state Department of Labor, local community colleges and technical high schools, and many others, the Manufacturing Pipeline is equipping Eastern Connecticut workers with the precise skills that employers are seeking — helping workers and their families secure good jobs, and strengthening our region's industrial base. Electric Boat and Three Rivers and Quinebaug Valley Community Colleges in Connecticut, along with state technical high schools, have developed a customized 10-week training program aligned to the job trades in the most demand."

Rep. Gerry Connolly (VA-11)

"We need an agenda focused on economic growth, not economic grievance… We need an agenda that focuses on growing the high tech economy and creating clean energy jobs. We need an agenda that assumes a global economy in which we all benefit from the free flow of goods and services. We need an agenda that invests in our future – education, R&D, and job training. And we need a reform agenda that rebuilds trust in government's ability to get things done and operate efficiently."

"Great countries achieve their success by making robust, sustainable investments in the three-legged stool of education, R&D, and infrastructure. Right now, America is disinvesting in all three! Meanwhile, our competitors – China, India, and others – are barreling ahead."

Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney (NY-18)

"[T]he future of the industry is uncertain - young farmers face too many obstacles today… according to the National Young Farmers Coalition, 78% of farmers ranked 'lack of capital' as the biggest challenge for beginning farmers. This is unacceptable, especially when you consider the impact that farmers have on the economy. The estimated gross economic impact of farming in the Hudson Valley is close to $1 billion each year."

"Here's how we can start: helping young farmers access good land at affordable prices; [partnering] with organizations to provide beginning farmers with the training they need; [investing] in developing local food infrastructure."

Rep. Norma Torres (CA-32)

"…I spent my first few months in office on a Jobs Listening Tour of my district, meeting with local economic leaders, education professionals, employees, and owners of businesses large and small. I wanted to hear straight from them what they thought we should do to bring jobs to our region… I can tell you that at every meeting we held, two issues always came up, better infrastructure and improved workforce development."

"The quick and cost-efficient transport of goods requires safe and modern roads, bridges, and railways, and you can't connect people to employment centers without expanding public transit. This requires significant, long-term investment in our nation's infrastructure, yet we're facing a $3.6 trillion funding shortfall over the next five years and are relying on short-term, stop-gap transportation authorization bills. There's no question Congress must do its job and pass a long-term Highway Trust Fund authorization, but we also have to look at new, innovative strategies to fill the gap…. The Job Opportunities between Our Shores Act, or JOBS Act, which also came out of what I heard during my listening tour, will connect educational institutions with manufacturers to train jobseekers in the skills employers demand. There is already one such program at work in my district with the partnership between California Steel Industries and Chaffey College. This is a model we should grow and build upon as manufacturing jobs in the Inland Empire and across the country are bouncing back."